

~~SECRET~~

b/c nic 25X1

#456

5 July 1988

MEMO FOR: B. Blackwell, L. Gershwin, L. Budge
FROM: C/NIC
SUBJECT: Draft DDCI Testimony for HASC

On the whole Ben's draft is excellent: Expert, thorough, balanced, and nuanced. It still awaits a healthy sprinkling of community views, which is the NIOs' responsibility. Please provide this.

There is, nevertheless, a largely implicit tendentiousness in the draft which I strongly suspect Gates will spot and object to. It needs to be made explicit and then countered with the contrary possibility.

The implicit tendency is that, while little has changed concretely as yet, the potential for "radical change" in the "nature of the military threat" is there, and that, if Gorbachev gets his way, the change will be uniformly benign. To wit:

List I

Less emphasis on military as opposed to other (political, economic, cultural) means of international power projection.

Reduced military spending because of arms control and economic constraints; resource shifts at the margin from military to civilian purposes.

More receptivity to stabilizing and verifiable arms control agreements.

Reduced force structure.

Reduced emphasis on destabilizing pursuit of warfighting/warwinning nuclear advantages.

Adoption of less offensive, more defensive military postures in the general purpose forces.

Adoption of "functional" definitions of military sufficiency which serve as self-denying prescriptions not to indulge in arms racing.

If all this were to come to pass, the US-Soviet strategic competition would be radically muted, and perhaps even disappear. The Cold War might be over.

~~SECRET~~

25X1

~~SECRET~~

25X1

As the draft notes, much is what is being said in the USSR today is being used, if not designed, to promote these very beliefs in the West...along with important internal political goals. But we have to ask what kind of Soviet superpower Gorbachev really has in his mind's eye and whether it is as benignly demilitarized as the tendency of some of these doctrinal themes and ideas implies to us.

If you take together the themes of strategy and doctrine, economic and technological modernization, arms control, and political effects on the West, it is quite possible, in about a decade's time, to come up with a different but more formidable Soviet threat than the one familiar to us. To wit:

List 2 Spurred by arms control politics and agreements, NATO defense efforts fall as sharply as they have in such periods in the past.

Aided by arms control politics and agreements, the Soviets manage a major reduction of the standing military forces of NATO and the Pact, while retaining and modernizing their advantage in mobilized forces.

Aided by arms control politics and agreements, the Soviets achieve reduction in the size of battlefield, theater, and strategic nuclear arsenals and the likelihood that they would be used in a European war.

Reductions of strategic arsenals by 50% and more leaves open the possibility that modernized remaining Soviet nuclear forces could achieve significant military advantages and that the USSR could survive a nuclear war.

A START/ABM Treaty regime could leave the Soviets free to pursue their kind of strategic defense (C3, forces, mobilization base) while precluding the area defenses that, in the long run, are the only kind with a political constituency in the US.

Detente gives the USSR the breathing space to modernize its industrial base for more effective technological competition, and "new thinking" makes it a more effective diplomatic competitor.

The Soviets end up with a more usable conventional advantage in Europe, a still powerful nuclear capability to inhibit nuclear escalation, and a combination of nuclear offensive and strategic defensive capabilities that allows plausibly for survival of a central nuclear war.

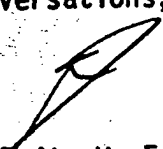
This scenario has a lot of "ifs" in it as well, most importantly the depressing effect of detente on Western military spending and vigilance. But it is as plausibly a conception of Gorbachev's vision of the future as the benign one suggested by much of the new rhetoric. It fits with the Gorbachev that I have seen across the table and with the institutions he is trying to win over. It fits with a USSR which, to paraphrase Solzhenitsyn, is trying to be both a great power and a great country.

~~SECRET~~

25X1

~~SECRET~~

I think we need to deal with this, at a minimum, by making explicit that among the uncertainties we are confronting is the degree to which the whole panoply of new things being bruted in the Soviet debate might constitute a new kind and intensity of strategic challenge, rather than a diminution of the challenge. On the basis of past conversations, I think the DDCI will want to do this.


Fritz W. Ermarth~~SECRET~~